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TRY RED LEADERS

A Yugoslav specialist in Bulgarian affairs and former Communist leader in Bulgaria, Ivan Karaivanov, comments as follows in the newspaper Politika [date not given] on the political background of Kunin and Sakelarov, main defendants in the secret Sofia trials of four Communist leaders.

Petko Kunin, one-time Minister of Finance, is described as one of the most prominent Bulgarian revolutionaries. Kunin is a veteran of the unsuccessful 1923 uprising. He managed to escape from an internment camp during World War II and subsequently organized partisan groups. After the war, he became a member of the Bulgarian Politburo and of the Supreme Economic Council, as well as Minister of Industry and later Minister of Finance.

The reason for his downfall, said Karaivanov, is his refusal to honor an enormous bill for expenses incurred by Bulgarian emigrants in Moscow before the war, presented to him by the Soviets while he was in office as Bulgarian Minister of Finance. This refusal, which occurred without previous consultation with the Ministerial Council, led to his being accused of collaboration with Kostov, whose downfall was precipitated by similar difficulties.

Kunin, like Kostov, belonged to a group of leaders regarded by the Soviets as unreliable. Their rise in the party did not take place during their residence in Moscow, but after their return to their own countries.

The second main defendant, Manal Sakelarov, former Minister of Public Works and Electrification, on the other hand, attained his position with the party while living in Moscow. Sakelarov, a construction engineer, was an old party member. His house served as the base of operations for the unsuccessful September (1943) uprising of Dimitrov and Kolarov with whom he emigrated to the USSR. He returned to Sofia after the overthrow of the government in 1944.

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Sakelarov fell into disgrace with the Soviets because he opposed the "planless and stupid" administration of the power plant and reservoir construction project, stated Karaivanov.

As for the remaining two defendants, one was formerly a member of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, and the other a regional party secretary, according to the writer.

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